

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No. 470/INST/2014-EPS

Dated: 30.04.2014

To

The Chief Electoral Officers
of all States and UTs.

**Sub: Counting of votes for General/Bye-elections to the House of People/State
Legislative Assembly – Counting procedure – regarding.**

Sir/Madam,

The Commission has issued various instructions on counting procedure and identification of counting centres and appointment of Counting Staff / Counting Agents, from time to time, which have been circulated to all the Chief Electoral Officers. In addition to these, some of the instructions were also issued during the General Election to State Legislative Assemblies held in the recent past. These instructions were not circulated all the Chief Electoral Officers. All these instructions have now been incorporated and consolidated in the enclosed letters No. 470/INST/2014-EPS dated 30.04.2014 for convenience of all stakeholders. The gist of these instructions are given below for facility of easy reference :

COUNTING OF POSTAL BALLOT PAPERS (PBs)

Reference No. 470/PB Counting/2013/SDR dated 4th December, 2013

- I. On the day previous to the date of counting, the Returning Officer shall meet the observer and furnish the latest account of the total number of postal ballot papers received back both from the facilitation centres and those received through post. At the time of commencement of counting he should also give similar information to the Observer in respect of postal ballot papers received subsequently and till the time fixed for commencement of counting on the day of counting.
- II. Ideally not more than 500 postal ballots may be counted in one Table at a time in each round. Accordingly, arrange for additional tables, subject to availability of space inside the counting hall, for counting of votes polled by postal ballot. However, ordinarily not more than four counting tables may be provided for counting of postal ballot paper. In

each Table for counting of postal ballot there should be an ARO. Thus there will be as many AROs for counting of postal ballot papers as are the number of Tables provided for counting of postal ballot. For each such Table, there will be one Counting Supervisor and two Counting Assistants. The Counting Supervisor and Counting Assistants for the postal ballot should be Gazetted officers.

- III. Persons involved in postal ballot counting should also be trained about all aspects of postal ballot counting for which there are already detailed instructions of the Commission.
- IV. RO or one of the AROs shall explain and demonstrate the requirements of a valid declaration to all the counting supervisors, assistants and the micro observers before the envelopes of the postal ballot papers are distributed to each of the counting tables and actual scrutiny of the declaration by the counting supervisor.
- V. The RO shall ensure that there is no inordinate delay in scrutiny of the declarations by the AROs and the counting supervisors.
- VI. There shall be an additional micro-observer (GOI or CPSU official) for each table for postal ballot counting.
- VII. All the cases of rejection of postal ballot on account of defects in Declaration in Form 13A should be re-verified by the Returning Officer before they are actually put in the rejected category.
- VIII. As already instructed in the Handbook for Returning Officers, the penultimate (one before the last) round of counting of votes recorded in EVMs shall not commence till the counting of postal ballot is completed in all respects.
- IX. **The contesting candidates will be entitled to appoint a counting agent for each Table provided for counting of postal ballot papers**

